

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07
INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 DODE-00 PA-01
USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /072 W
-----042304Z 127417 /12

R 041353Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5993
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3124

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ICFTU, ELAB, IS
SUBJECT: ICFTU SECRETARY GENERAL OTTO KERSTEN VISITS ISRAEL

1. OTTO KERSTEN, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ICFTU, IS CURRENTLY VISITING ISRAEL AS GUEST OF THE HISTADRUT. HE CAME TO ATTEND THE HISTADRUT MAY DAY CELEBRATION AND TO SHOW ICFTU SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. ORIGINALLY HE HAD INTENDED TO PARTICIPATE AT THE MAY DAY CELEBRATION IN MADRID; HOWEVER, WHEN THE SPANISH UNIONS REPORTEDLY ADVISED HIM NOT TO COME IN THE LIGHT OF ANTICIPATED DEMONSTRATIONS AND STREET CLASHES, HE OFFERED HIMSELF TO THE ISRAELIS.

2. THE ISRAELIS SHOWED HIM THE CUSTOMARY COURTESIES FOR VIP'S AND ARRANGED MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON AND ACTING PRIME MINISTER PERES. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO HISTADRUT SOURCES, HE MOSTLY CONDUCTED A MONOLOGUE OF GENERALITIES.

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3. KERSTEN GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE CALLED ON ISRAEL TO RECOGNIZE THE PLO AND ON THE HISTADRUT TO INITIATE A DIALOGUE WITH WORKERS IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES. WHEN CHALLENGED BY REPORTERS, HE DREW BACK HIS COMMENT ON THE PLO AND SAID THAT HE HAD MEANT PALESTINIANS. HE FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT THE HISTADRUT AND THE ARAB TRADE UNIONS--SOME

OF THEM AFFILIATED WITH THE ICFTU--AVAIL THEMSELVES
OF ICFTU GOOD OFFICES TO ARRANGE TRADE UNION CONTACTS
BETWEEN JEWISH AND ARAB WORKERS. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE
BEEN ENCOURAGED BY TUNISIAN SUGGESTIONS THAT THE
UGTT MAY BE WILLING TO PLAY SOME UNSPECIFIED INTER-
MEDIARY ROLE IN THIS PROCESS. HE ALSO ANNOUNCED--
AS HE HAD ON AN EARLIER VISIT--THAT HE PLANNED TO
VISIT EGYPT, ALTHOUGH SO FAR HE HAS NOT BEEN INVITED,
AND THAT ON THE OCCASION HE HOPED TO DISCUSS WITH
THE EGYPTIAN UNIONS THE POSSIBILITY OF ARAB-ISRAELI
LABOR CONTACTS UNDER ICFTU AUSPICES.

4. COMMENT: THE HISTADRUT WAS NOT OVERLY IMPRESSED
WITH KERSTEN AND MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEPART-
MENT SUGGESTED THAT HIS PRINCIPAL INTEREST IN THE
HISTADRUT IS ITS CLOSE TIE WITH THE AFL-CIO. KERSTEN
REPORTEDLY SAID THAT ON HIS RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON
HE HAD BEEN WELL RECEIVED BY AFL-CIO PRESIDENT
MEANY, LANE KIRKLAND AND OTHER LABOR LEADERS. WHILE
HE DID NOT SEE ANY IMMEDIATE CHANCE FOR THE AFL-CIO
RETURNING TO THE ICFTU, HE FELT THAT OPPORTUNITIES
FOR CLOSER COOPERATION WITH AMERICAN LABOR MOVE-
MENT HAD IMPROVED. AS EXAMPLES OF THE PLATITUDES
WHICH KERSTEN WAS SPOUTING, THE ISRAELIS CITED HIS
CALL FOR COOPERATION ON DEALING WITH MULTINATIONAL
CORPORATIONS AND FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION
PLANNING ON HOW TO DEAL WITH INFLATION WHILE MAIN-
TAINING FULL EMPLOYMENT. ISRAELIS WERE INCLINED TO YAWN WHEN
HE PRAISED OF ISRAEL FOR HAVING MAINTAINED
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FULL EMPLOYMENT DESPITE ITS SERIOUS INFLATIONARY
PROBLEMS.
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Message Attributes

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